



# Beyond Rhetoric: Amnesty Programme and Peace Building in Post Conflict Niger Delta

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## General Note



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## ABSTRACT

The thrust of the study was to investigate the impact of the Niger Delta amnesty programme and its implication for peace building in post amnesty Niger Delta. In the discourse, we analysed the possibilities of normalizing the amnesty programme by anchoring the study in a post conflict perspective that is missing in the conceptualization and implementation of the amnesty programme, and suggest measures that best describe and serve as durable solutions to the intractable problems in the Niger Delta. The study explored various perspectives of conflict transformation theory to see the possibility of sustainable peace in post conflict Niger Delta. The study adopted the qualitative and quantitative research designs. A sample size of 900 respondents were drawn across the ex-militants, non militants, staff of the amnesty offices, government political appointees and CLOs in the nine Niger Delta states. The result showed that the Amnesty Programme or DDR implementation in the Niger Delta is too exclusive, did not meet policy objective and devoid of post conflict peace building mechanisms. Although, it temporarily stabilized peace; but failed in long term peace building. The study revealed a higher percentage of arms and resurgence of violence, militancy and criminality in post amnesty Niger Delta. As a result, there is, in other words, a need for new concepts and practices that can advance the ideals of the positive (post conflict transition to peace building) that enables individuals in post war settlement situations to share common identities, understandings, and expectations that enhance a social order, encourages inclusiveness, reassertion, resettlements and;

extending of social benefits to non-militants youths, women, vulnerable groups, communities affected by the conflict, reintegration into home communities of ex-militants, community activists and the causes and triggers of conflict –the Niger Delta question (?) broad base. We recommend the need to redesign the presidential amnesty programme (PAP) goals, contents, benefit structures and breadth in such ways that they would be more inclusive and comprehensive.

**Keywords:** Amnesty Programme, DDR, Post Conflict Transition, Peace Building, Niger Delta.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The federal government of Nigeria introduced amnesty programme in the Niger Delta in October, 2009. This decision was borne out of the “doctrine of necessity” resulting from the Niger Delta militants: the Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) etc, disruption of crude oil and gas installations, and kidnapping of foreign oil company workers in the region. The militants prosecuted the war within the plains, forests and creeks in the region. Their activities crippled the daily output of crude oil production from 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2004 to 0.80 million bpd in the first quarter of 2009 (Etekpe, 2012).

Their grouse included disinheritance by federal government laws, loss of control over their resources, marginalization in the oil economy, marginality within the Nigerian federation and militarization and repression through military and security agencies (Ikelegbe, 2013; Ibaba, 2014). In relation to the Transnational Oil Companies (TNOCs), the Niger Delta people complain of environmental pollution, mistreatment, poor compensation practices, poor benefits, unfulfilled promises, and failures to implement memoranda of understanding and inadequate employment and representation (Ikelegbe, 2010:31). Other grievances are: poverty, deprivation, high youth unemployment and hopelessness, the takeover of oil benefits and oil blocks by non-indigenes of the Niger Delta, and the location of TNOCs offices outside the Niger Delta.

The objective of the amnesty programmed was to place the Niger Delta on the path of conflict resolution, peace building, stability, and conflict transformation (Kuku, 2013). The programme has four major phases, beginning with the pardoning of the militants for them to voluntarily renounce militancy, followed by disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR). The phases were designed to change the mindset of the ex-militants and facilitate their adjustment to normal life (Udegbumam, 2013). Thus, they were trained in batches in different areas of skills and entrepreneurship in the orientation and rehabilitation camp in Obubra Cross River State, Nigeria.

Disarmament entails the physical removal of the means of combat from ex-belligerents (weapons, ammunition); and sometimes of the civilian population, and the development of responsible arms management (United Nations, 2006), in order to secure the environment and demonstrate the cessation of violence. Demobilization is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups, the disbanding of armed groups, and their re-orientation through programmes in camps or designated locations. Reintegration is the social and economic process by which ex-combatants, civilian associates, civil communities, victims of war and IDPs acquire and gain sustainable employment and income through training, education and economic empowerment programmes (Ikelegbe, 2010:16).

Sequel, 30,000 ex-militants have been disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated into the society and a considerable number of them have already graduated from their training programmes. Over 9,192 have graduated from the skills programme in various fields majorly welding and fabrication, but including 66 air plane and helicopter pilots and 61 aviation maintenance engineers (<http://eworldmagazine.Com/index.Php/eworld-news/national-news>).

However, the problems in the Niger Delta (the oil producing region of Nigeria) seem not to abate in post amnesty period. Critical studies in the literature avow that the crisis increase every day in leaps and bounds. There are not just pervasive conflicts, violence and insecurity; but a breakdown of social and political order and an increasing ungovernability in the region. From mere agitations against unfair treatment in terms of engagement of ex-militants into sustainable means of livelihood and irregular payment of their monthly stipends etc to confrontations, riots, demonstrations and youth restiveness. More so, in recent times, there is increased unrest amongst communities in the Niger Delta and assuming dangerous dimension. There is the upsurge in local cultism, armed gangs killing and maiming natives and citizens, kidnapping, sea pirates, oil theft/bunkering etc. The rise in post amnesty violent incidents and disturbances is of grave concern. This implies the presence or apprehension of danger to lives and property and the presence of non-conducive atmosphere for the people to pursue their legitimate interest within the society.

The study adopts the concepts of exclusion as a perspective for critically examining the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) and its outcomes, achievements, and impacts on sustainable peace, security, and development in post conflict Niger Delta. At issue

are the levels of inclusion or exclusion in goals, conception, content, strategies, implementation, benefit and target beneficiaries and how these are generating conditions that are functional and facilitative or otherwise in relation to sustainable peace, security and development in the Niger Delta.

Beyond this, we develop an account of post conflict transition to peace building that does not discard the use of DDR, but builds on its strategies to establish an arm string to veritable but shaded aspects inhibiting lasting peace in the Niger Delta.

The study is divided into five sub-topics: research methodology, presidential amnesty programme and peace building in post conflict Niger Delta: A review of the literature; Amnesty Programme and Peace building in the Niger Delta: missing links in post conflict transition to peace building; Data presentation/analysis; Discussion; Conclusion and Recommendations.

The study basically is an attempt to provide a basis for rethinking post conflict peace process, political and social reconciliation, social and economic rehabilitation and longer term development in the Niger Delta in the aftermath of war.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used the survey design to collect data from respondents with the aid of a structured 5 item statement questionnaire. 987 copies were administered however, 900 were retrieved and used in analysing the primary data. Since the central aim of the study is to elicit the opinion of people viz. the ex-militants, non-militants, staff of the amnesty programme, government political appointees and members of CLOs in order to determine the impact of the amnesty programme and peace building in post conflict Niger Delta. Additional data were sourced from amnesty bulletins, periodic reports, amnesty international, transparency international etc. The documents proved very useful in data sourcing and analysis.

### Statement of Research Problem

The objective of the study is to investigate the impact of the amnesty programme and post conflict transition to peace building in the Niger Delta.

### Research Hypothesis

**H<sub>0</sub>:** Amnesty Programme has not impacted significantly in post conflict transition to peace building in the Niger Delta.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Amnesty programme has impacted significantly in post conflict transition to peace building in the Niger Delta.

The study draws on two major perspectives to peace building that have tended to guide conflict transformation programmes more generally in conflict divided societies, and its application in the Niger Delta. The first is the neo-liberal, western centric model which emphasized neo-liberal political and economic reforms in the areas of civil rights, elections, good governance, rules of law, constitutionalism, justice, and market reforms as part of the overall intervention and processes of 'reconstituting social order' (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2009:180). Although, this is the dominant practice of peace building, and an over emphasis tends to perpetuate new challenges and tensions for post conflict transition to peace process in developing societies whose statecraft and development in the main are cantankerous to its transformative model. Duffield (2007) posits that DDR is at the heart of neo-liberal forms of power and governmentality. This means that DDR does not emerge spontaneously from below; rather, it is part of what Muggah (2009:2) describes as a "broader Weberian project of securing the legitimate control of force" from combatants on behalf of the state.

The framework stands theoretically effectual to analyse the relationship between the PAP and Nigerian government policies on one hand, but ineffectual and unsuccessful in transformative peace building in the Niger Delta. It suffices to say that DDR by the Nigerian government lacks basic neo-liberal approach and comprises cluster of activities designed only to contain arms, dismantle armed groups and prevent the recurrence of war or violent conflict above every other consideration for sustainable peace building.

The second transformative model is a less technical and less dictated pathway that seeks conflict transformation and durable peace. It incorporates the focus on the underlying structural and root causes of the violent conflict and deeper social transformation of the conflict environment (Ikelegbe, 2013; 2014) viz. the larger communities that are affected by armed violence and a number of programmes and activities that can be implemented in order to support the peace process, build trust, contribute to a secure environment and help build the foundation for longer-term peace building. Further, this strand helps to deflate the participation effect in the Niger Delta amnesty programme example which functions as an obstacle to the peace process. It is more flexible and context specific and more engaging of social forces and actors in conflict divided societies. However, peace building is often limited and constrained by diverse challenges rooted in the fragility of the conflict environment and the interplay of diverse internal and external forces that harm string performance. Therefore, peace building generally has contestable results with less than an unqualified success and as clearly as many cases of failure, as there are successes.

Reflections on these processes in the Niger Delta along with those in other war afflicted countries outside Africa have enabled stakeholders to take stock of post conflict situations and identify both the lessons learnt and suggested reforms. Generally, peace building advocates and scholars tend to emphasize building relationships, communication, and individual and groups responsibility and eliminating hostility between groups (Gawerce, 2006; Fitzduff, 2001). This suggests that implementation of DDR strategies necessarily warrant the inclusion of all parties and stakeholders in conflict for amicable resolution.

Lederach (1997) argues that there is need to develop a wide range of activities and approaches that recognize the need for both systematic and relationship change. In his conflict transformation theory, Lederach (1997) puts forward a holistic approach to transforming conflict from a destructive form to a situation amenable to all confronting parties. Part of his strategy was to completely and deliberately engage the multiplicity of issues that not only generated the conflicts, but that also continued to make the conflict protracted.

These perspectives help us understand that DDR in the Niger Delta amnesty programme fits into a typical traditional DDR which has been replaced with the second generation DDR as a result of the weaknesses of the former. Traditional DDR focuses mainly on combatants involving a range of activities falling under the operational categories of DDR. This occurs as a result of the artificial grafting of the amnesty programme on the conflict without attempts at meaningfully engaging grievances. Again, it reinforces the argument that the Niger Delta militants are estranged hirelings of influential members of the political and economic ruling elites who entered the conflict for their own profit, and their desire for profit is abstracted and transformed into legitimate grievances that is justified through popular rhetoric.

More so, from a political economy perspective, DDR encapsulates the strategic and bureaucratic priorities of the security and development sectors of a state, but evidence suggests that the programme fall far short of development expectations in the long run sustainable peace building in the Niger Delta. For this reason, scholars (Okonofua, 2011; Ibaba, 2013; Ikelegbe, 2013, 2014; and Joab-Peterside, 2007) have respectively contested that the programme is heavily militant centric instead of addressing genuine grievances.

Thus, it is imperative that the Nigerian government and particularly its political class or governing elite's needs to stimulates the discourse on the policy priorities of the Niger Delta amnesty programme about the DDR management to be inclusive and comprehensive, that includes: women, children, vulnerable groups, and communities in terms of targeting, benefits and incentives (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2007).

### **Amnesty Programme and Peace Building in Post Conflict Niger Delta: A Review of the Literature**

Post conflict transition ensures comprehensive changes in terms of structures, institutions, orientations, and attitudes (Collier, Hoeffler, and Soderbam, 2005, 2006). Udegbumam (2013) posits that amnesty guarantees an interregnum of peace, cessation of hostility and a state of unsecured quiet which necessitates a post conflict scenario for peace building. It behoves therefore, that post conflict transition to peace building is very sensitive and involves socio-political engineering, economic recovery and security interventions for successful conflict resolution among warring parties. This perception has led many scholars and advocates of peace building to critically look at the Niger Delta amnesty programme DDR in a post conflict transition perspective -that is sustainable and transformative especially within the context of the upsurge in militancy, violent crimes and local cultism in the region.

Joab-Peterside (2013); Ibaba (2011); Ekumaoko (2013) posit that conflict reversion in the Niger Delta is due to the poor handling and management of post conflict transition to peace, sequentially in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the amnesty programme. In this analysis, unresolved grievances of the inhabitants of the region and absence of inclusiveness are viewed within the context of the PAP and the federal government of Nigeria glossing over the causes and triggers of the conflict. Zartman (1989), and Collier, Hoeffler and Soderbam (2005, 2006) have found that post conflict economic growth and economic recovery for example reduces substantially the risk of conflict reversion. In distinct manner, Etekpe (2012) and Omokhoa (2015) challenged the implementation of DDR due largely to its scope and short sightedness to include a whole of transformational remedies peculiar to the region, and the creation of conducive environment for building trust, reducing poverty and hostility.

Many of the studies (Ebiede and Langer, 2017; Ekpimah, 2012; and Ibaba, 2013) added that there is increasing need to explore the essentials of the Niger Delta struggle left at the first stage in the management of post conflict transition to peace, which precedes and provides a clement environment for post conflict reconstruction and recovery, conflict transformation and peace building. Specifically, Ebiede and Langer (2017) traced the emergence of Niger Delta Avengers (NDAs)—a new armed group that emerged in the Niger Delta between 2015 and 2016; and claimed responsibility for several post amnesty violence harped on the unresolved grievances by the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta.

Some empirical literature provides argument supportive of the fact that despite the Nigerian government rhetoric on the success of the amnesty programme in the Niger Delta, the superiority and prevailing presence of the government over the people of the

Niger Delta places the latter at a very great disadvantage over the inhabitants (Oluduro, and Oluduro, 2012). It is argued that several aspects of post conflict transition to peace building strategies are lacking and unattended to in the PAP in the Niger Delta and ultimately leading to internal violence among the locals over few privileges to combat poverty and underdevelopment.

Most recent works (Ekumaoko, 2013; Omokhoa, 2015; Ebiede and Langer, 2017; Vurasi and Nna, 2020) draw on the argument that there have been difficulties with useful engagement or absorption of the ex-militants for full and productive lives after their post-rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. Most ex-militants in the Niger Delta remain jobless and unproductively engaged (Ikelegbe, 2014 and Ibaba, 2011; 2013) relying solely on monthly government stipends and aids from family members and friends. Beyond the ex-militants, some of the inhabitants like the vulnerable youths, women and victims of wars were left out of the largess of the amnesty programme. This constitutes a serious bane on programme success and acts like a 'cage of gun powder' and spoilers in post conflict Niger Delta. In this debate, Collier and Hoeffler, and Soderbam (2006) argued that a higher risk of conflict exists where there is absence of income earning opportunities for youths.

The contention is that, the role of government is fundamentally essential in the specific sense of providing employment and empowerment that is sustainable for the inhabitants, ultimately to dissuade their indulgence in crime and violent conflicts in post conflict situation. Ukiwo, (2009) argues that alienation leads to resentment, anger, discontent and frustration against competitors with social miscreants in the society taking advantage of minor clashes to cause confusion and loot public and private property.

John Dollard (1939), in what became known as the frustration-aggression hypothesis, contended that the occurrence of aggressive behaviour always presupposes the existence of frustration and contrariwise, the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression. This conceptualization leads to a fundamental 'post conflict dilemma' in which the attempt of the government to strengthen post amnesty peace can be achieved. It is in this sense that the frustration-aggression theory and the relative deprivation theory both of which suggest that individuals become aggressive when there are obstacles-perceived and real to their success in life (Draman, 2003).

Against this backdrop, approaching post conflict peace building essentially requires that focus should not merely be on the actors involved in the crisis per se, but rather on institutional restructuring of the triggers of such conflict (Lederach, 1997; Galtung, 1978). In this context (Ibeanu, 2000) argues that democracy, good governance, proactive measures and initiative is expedient to strengthening the process. However, Kia and Vurasi (2013) hold that democracy means nothing if people do not have access to nourishing food, good health, good education, access to resources for a good life.

The idea of post conflict peace building in the Niger Delta through the instrumentality of DDR is noted to be at variant with proper reintegration and rehabilitation. Recent studies, Omokhoa (2015), Udegbuma, (2013); Chukwuka and Oben, 2010) and other important stakeholders recognise that the success of DDR programme is tied to their ability to reintegrate ex-combatants socially, and economically. Muggah (2009) added political mainstreaming. The failure in the demobilization strategy of the amnesty programme severely undermined the building of sustainable peace. For this reason, Berdel (1996), Okonofua (2011) and Vurasi and Nna, (2020) at different times variously noted that ex-militants that remained partially demobilized re-organized within hitherto existing command structures to potentially play the role of kidnapping, sea pirates, oil theft local war lords and commanders in communities and organized crime in the Niger Delta. This conceptualization leads to a fundamental post amnesty proliferation in arms in which the government and community leaders seem helpless to address. Kia, (2013); Ekumaoku, (2013) expressed worry and envisioned a total breakdown of social order about how devastating the situation would be when a more educated and trained ex-militants would take up arms again against the state. Along this line, Udegbuma (2013) notes that ex-militants in the Niger Delta were hastily demobilized and reintegrated into the society, especially when the process failed to adequately dismantle command and control structures within two weeks of demobilization.

This corroborates an earlier study by Hithcock (2004) that in some cases, ex-combatants unintentionally reinforced latent command structures especially when precautions to prevent this from happening were not adopted in advance. In line with this thinking, Vurasi and Nna (2020); Amadi, Imoh-Itah and Obomanu (2016) in a recent study expanded the scope of post amnesty violence to the sphere of patron-client political patronage and reward for criminality by political leaders. Locating this within the purview of 'prebendalism' and 'clientelism' where those in political power solely and primarily depended and concerned with the improvement of the material well being of some ex-militants groups to win elections and gain control of states' institutions. Criminality here becomes a progeny of spoilt politics where the winner takes all and uses such spoils to reward those who supported them in office.

The aspiring elites depend on such informal social network of the ex-militants groups turned cultists to forge their way to the top and to consolidate themselves in such position on the socio-political ladder (Joab-Peterside, 2007; Ebiede and Langer (2017). The groups whose interests are not directly represented, suffers and consequently withhold their support from the government in power to the major opposition political parties in the states, igniting inter and intra communal crises, staging gang wars at different

fronts across the region, and indulging in wanton destruction of lives and property, oil theft/bunkering, sea pirating, kidnapping for ransom etc. More so, they contend and oppose community leadership and authority.

The study notes that, upsurge in local cultism –Dey Well, DeyGbam, and the emergence of Ice Land, Green Lander Movement arose in the Niger Delta states due to the political power interplay/interchange, structural modifications, new social formations, new class alliances and the desire for these classes to gain supremacy over one another to control leadership in the communities, local governments and states or for group identity or competition for status and power in post amnesty

Okonofua (2011) posits that the Niger Delta DDR has been shown to encompass weaknesses in economic reintegration, social reintegration, and political reintegration. At the level of social reintegration wherein local communities accepts ex-combatants their families and primary support system as members of the community were nonexistent. Usually, this involves basic social relationship and rehabilitation which includes resettlement of displaced persons, assistance and support to victims of violence and destruction, humanitarian support for the wounded and disabled as a result of war and trauma, social justice, counselling to victims of violence, rape and human rights abuses (Sklair, 2001). Ikelegbe and Onokerhoraye (2016) harp on the integration of communities to facilitate resettlement and reintegration of ex-militants into civilian and community life. This has been identified as crucial to sustainable and effective DDR (Carames & Sanz 2009).

Whereas, Hithcock, (2004); Ibaba (2011) and Imongan, and Ikelegbe (2015 & 2016) advocate the disarming of individuals and communities along side ex-combatant groups as foremost a confidence building exercise. Okonofua (2011) adds that the lack of international partnership and collaboration affected both the design and implementation of the Niger Delta DDR programme. Drawing example from Timor-leste experience, he says two of the four DDR were designed and managed by international organizations. The UNDP designed and managed the RESPECT programme (Recovery, Employment and Stability Programme for Ex-combatants and Communities in Timor-leste).

All of these implies that in order for peace to be implanted and sustained in the long term, all of the powerful political and economic interests whose machinations directly but unobtrusively produced both the negative conditions of the Delta and ultimately the violence, must be dismantled. This study presupposes a new line of inquiry on strengthening the relative peace in the Niger Delta especially when it is recognised that DDR component alone is incapable of providing the desire out come and must be complemented with parallel activities such as blocking the sources of arms and guns and the sponsors of post conflict violence in the region (Vurasi and Nna, 2020).

We draw on some of these arguments to posit that, federal government and PAP failure to situate the amnesty programme in a post conflict transition to peace building orchestrated the serial violence and social disorder in post amnesty Niger Delta. A substantial literature in social psychology has demonstrated that perceptions have a great deal of influence on human behaviour (Eckhart, 1991; Lahaye, 2002; Goleman, 2007). The underlying consequences are palpable failures of the programme more than ten years of existence. This study goes further to argue that leadership and fellowship gap vis-a-vis alienation by PAP physically and psychologically violated the self esteem of the Niger Delta people, and has done much harm to their human psyche. Much of these failures suggest a new look at post amnesty violence and peace building implications. It involves a deliberate effort to deconstruct the negative images that prevailed in the past during years of conflict and building the present.

### **Amnesty Programme and Peace Building in the Niger Delta: Missing Link in Post Conflict Transition to Peace Building**

Although, the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) is ongoing but after over ten years, the programme could be assessed and tentative statements made. The programme has achieved limited success in terms of the conclusion of disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation. The disarmament programme was incomplete and excluded the disarming of the civil population and the control and or stoppage of arms proliferation. The reintegration programme is ongoing but not much progress has been made. The demobilization process was accompanied by inadequacies of facilities and provisions (Udegbuma, 2013). The reintegration has lacked the monitoring of the return and reintegration of ex-militants into communities, and there are still protests about disarmed ex-militants who are excluded from the PAP rehabilitation and reintegration programmes (Imongan, and Ikelegbe, 2015 & 2016). Such neglects tend to make peace building process in the Niger Delta in a number of instances seem to contradict its own discourses and work by operating outside conflict transformation paradigm.

Hitherto, seminal debates in the literature have argued that the conceptualization and implementation, and participation effect in the amnesty programme example functions as an obstacle and more generally as an abstraction to the peace process. This occurs as a result of the artificial grafting of the amnesty programme on the conflict without attempts at meaningfully engaging the ex-militants and the Niger Delta people with a view to addressing genuine grievances.

The various phases of the amnesty policy show, there is a probability that not all the militants appeared and released their weapons for the sake of amnesty. This may be as a result of mistrust of the government by the militants which in a way is sending



signals that some of the so called disarmed militants may perhaps have returned back to militancy and criminality for the fear of uncertainty.

Sequel, there have been difficulties with the useful engagement or absorption of the ex-militants whether they are trained abroad or locally after the completion of their post-rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, particularly in vocational or educational training. The major dilemma of PAP fulfilling its promise to empower ex-militants in a way that allow them to live full and productive lives in peace time has been daunting. As noted earlier, only a few have been lucky enough to be employed by a few corporate organizations (Ikelegbe, and Umukoro, 2016). Unfortunately, most ex-militants remain jobless, relying solely on monthly government stipends and aid from family members and friends (<http://forums.ssrc.org/kujenga-amani>).

The amnesty package tended to have used the subjective criteria of confining only to the internal lists submitted to it by the armed groups, supported by some form of verification committees set up by the Defence Headquarters. The weakness of the criteria is demonstrated in the over bloated size of ex-militants, which seemed to have crowded out the real militants who tended to have come out in later phases. PAP excludes community youths and the youths of the region. Numerous youths in the Niger Delta, particularly the uneducated and unemployed who see the PAP as their hope for empowerment and human capital development are disappointed in the process, and have organized numerous protests in order to compel inclusion. In that order; PAP is however too exclusive as it targets only ex-militants without consideration for the victims of militancy and hostage taking in the region (Naanen and Tolani, 2014) mothers who have lost children, children who had lost fathers, families that have lost homes and persons who have been displaced by the conflict were not included in the amnesty package presumably as a result of their lack of means of violence (Okonofua, 2011; Ebiede, 2017).

More so, the communities that were destroyed by the police, military, and in the confrontations between the military and militias, as well as communities that were devastated by intra militia fighting remain as they were, as the social facilities and social services that were destroyed have not been reconstructed. PAP failed to situate itself in a post conflict transition to peace programme and has failed to address the issues of rehabilitation and reconstruction of properties, social amenities and communities devastated by the violent conflicts between 1997 and 2020.

The home communities which should have been regarded as part of the reintegration programme and thus, should be empowered to participate in the design, planning and execution were left out. Carames and Sanz (2009b) drawing on the experience of the Angolan and Afghanistan DDR programmes strengthen community capacity for ex-combatants to including rebuilding infrastructures destroyed in the wars, reconcile ex-combatants to home or host communities, the institution of process and activities of dialogue and reconciliation in the communities, adoption of open measures for returning ex-combatants by communities etc. Also drawing on the weakness of social, political and economic exclusion in the Niger Delta, the government has also not fully addressed the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-militants as part of post conflict peace initiative DDR. This portends danger and the perceived importance of being part of society or being integrated that is lacking!

Omokhoa (2015) argues that, there is the lack of a structural framework for peace building at community, local government, state and regional levels, and lack of mobilization and harnessing of community based organizations, grassroots organizations and civil society for participation in peace building. Further, there has not been substantive harnessing of efforts and capacity building efforts of NGOs, CBOs and other groups in relation to conflict prevention, conflict monitoring and early conflict warning. The efforts at building stakeholders for peace, rebuilding relations between groups, the establishing of frameworks for dialogue and negotiations, the rebuilding of social capital and goodwill among communities, and elites are still weak if they exist at all. Similarly, the critical duties of peace advocacy, peace enlightenment and the mobilization of volunteers for peace works are yet to be substantively performed, while the region is expected to transit to peace and security without deliberate efforts directed at peace building.

In line with the above, reconciliation processes have not been put in place in most Niger Delta oil –producing communities. Perhaps, it is important to underline the fact that reconciliation is a key requirement for positive peace. As noted elsewhere, some ex-militants have been perceived as threat to communities of their harbour and sometimes subject it to undue social and political pressures. On account of this, community leaderships sometimes compromise and prefer to “let sleeping dogs lie”. They grumble about the elevation of militia generals from “war lords” to “rich lords” as well as the subsidization of most of their foot soldiers with monthly government stipends, while publicly ignoring the human rights abuses these ex-militants had previously perpetrated. Because PAP did not envisage reconciliation and justice, the amnesty offered was exclusionary (United Nations, 2006; Ikelegbe, 2014; Vurasi and Nna, 2020).

With the resurgence of insurgency, cultism, militia violence and inter and intra community crises in post amnesty Niger Delta, it is now being realised that poor DDR interfacing with community reintegration and rehabilitation make for the reluctance of the ex-militants to disarm on returning to their home communities. Most ex-militants rather relocated to urban areas with likely potentials

for social stigmatization as kidnappers, armed robbers, hoodlums, prostitutes, pick pockets, snatches etc. Others stayed back to indulge in oil theft, bunkering, local theft, gang and cult crisis, sea pirating, and supper imposing authorities in the communities.

From the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that the plight of the Niger Delta people variously expressed in protests, agitations, demonstrations and even militancy have not been also addressed in post amnesty. This has continued to generate various negative notions about the policy and the government as well as the other members of the Niger Delta who are not militants, such as the people who played the role of informants for the militants on one hand, and those who never had anything to do with militancy, who are beginning to see criminality as a justification for gainful, opportunistic and ideal way of survival and climbing the ladder of wealth acquisition in the Niger Delta. This has gone beyond the mere analysis of amnesty programme DDR and includes power relations, agency, culture and social identity (de Haan, 2012).

By and large, lack of power or unequal power relations and resource allocation to the disadvantage of the Niger Delta is at the root of every type of exclusion and grievances in the Nigerian amnesty programme. Exclusion thus refers to issues of entitlements or disentitlement associated with the structured basis of privileges, the membership and access to institutions that distribute material and symbolic resources, and the benefits that are enjoyed by those who belong and those who cannot (Ikelegbe, 2014). Silver (1994-6) discusses this under monopoly paradigm as a consequence of formation of powerful groups restricting the access of outsiders to value resources through social closure. Whereas, inclusive DDR programming generally are usually beneficial to combatants most of whom are adult males who have participated in combat and/or support roles such as cooks, porters or messengers. There may also be women and children, including those abducted and sexually exploited. There are also direct benefits to dependents of ex-combatants such as spouses, children and other dependents of ex-combatants (Duffield, 2007).

Conversely, an examination of the formulation and implementation of PAP in the Niger Delta reveals several dimensions of exclusions. Groups and individuals were ignored in the distribution of advantages and benefits. There was lack of fairness and equity in the access and participation of individuals and groups in the programme in terms of ethnicity, communities and gender.

A critical interrogation reveals exclusion in conception, selection, eligibility and participation; in content or breath; implementation and the management of the programme. By conceptual exclusion, we refer to several crucial dimensions of the transition from war to peace building that was left out of the conception and design of the PAP. These include the issues of political settlement and peace agreement, post conflict reconstructions, post conflict recovery, transitional justice, post amnesty programme and security reform. By lack of political settlement and peace agreement we noted a DDR that had political dimensions that preceded the Post Conflict Transition to Peace (PCTP) and persists through the entire process which is being ignored. We note that there has to be a political dialogue, negotiations, and resulting settlement and agreement that become the tentative format or framework for PCTP. This is what builds the common ground for the entire process and the goodwill, trust and commitment of political leaders and stakeholders that sustains the process.

Besides, the amnesty as design was not rooted in any agreement or resolution of grievances underlying the armed resistance. Rather than engage in open negotiations or a formal peace agreement with the militants, there were consultations between top federal government officials particularly those of Niger Delta origin-the Niger Delta elites/elders and top militants leaders to embrace amnesty, and further meetings between the late President and individual top militant leaders who embrace the amnesty. Ikelegbe, and Umukoro, (2016) expresses doubt whether the entire gamut of the region's problems and grievances and the policy and political frameworks for their short and long term resolutions featured in those meetings. It thus appears that, the PAP was based on the promises, seeming sincerity and commitment of the late President rather than any concrete or substantive and documented agreements and understanding based on broad based dialogue and negotiations that is sustainable.

Ideally, post conflict environments usually seek reconstructions that promote conflict resolution, peace building, economic recovery and political stability. The goals of socio-economic reconstruction are the rebuilding of damaged rural infrastructures and restoration of livelihoods sources. But there is the dilemma between narrow and broad based reconstruction in the Niger Delta. Fisher and Keashly, (1990:1) assert that, while the former benefits the elites, ex-combatant commanders and leaders, the latter targets reduction in poverty, increased incomes and broad benefits to the citizenry. Largely on these grounds, the people of the Niger Delta have been sub changed and made to suffer various forms of Lordships and mistreatments particularly from resource(s) distribution, armed confrontations and violence that lasted for many decades. These generated extensive damages to lives and property, social amnesties, commence and livelihoods. The oil producing communities continue to be plagued by pollution, and a state of dilapidated school buildings, health centres and social amenities. While lacking modern amenities, the little that they had was devastated or decadent. Most inhabitants are still tied to subsistence sources of livelihoods -mainly farming and fishing which remains susceptible to oil pollution and Land expropriation.

In all these, (Imongan and Ikelegbe, 2015 &2016) noted that 'recovery in conflict afflicted regions requires policy frameworks, political and economic reforms, infrastructures, economic and development programmes that could lay the foundation for recovery



of incomes and livelihoods; regeneration of local economies and business, regeneration of the culture of work and earned livelihoods and the building of human capacities and development'. PAP and government policies in post amnesty era have not been directed at the recovery of the Niger Delta from the extensive damages to her economy, human capital and human development.

We also note that, there is exclusion of reconciliation and transitional justice from programme design and implementation. Whereas reconciliation and transitional justice involves the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society's attempt to come to terms with a Legacy of Large scale past abuses, in order to ensue accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation, and also consists of both judicial and non-judicial processes and mechanisms, including prosecution initiatives, facilitative initiatives in respect of forgiveness, the right to truth, reparations, institutional reforms and national consultations were expunged in the PAP; against United Nations, (2006) warning that whatever combination that is chosen must be in conformity with international legal standards and obligations.

The politics and governance within the region since the amnesty have failed to facilitate the reconciliation necessary to addressing these problems because it is driven by struggles over power and resources by factions of the elite and warlords (Udegbumam, 2013). Since PAP in the Niger Delta, there have been no substantive efforts through the establishment of platforms, forum and even consultative meetings as instruments for the reconciliation of diverse groups, sectors and interests, neither have there been structures for dialogue, negotiations and reconstruction of diverse broken relationships within and between communities and ethnic groups, between communities and the oil companies and oil serving companies.

In conceptualizing post conflict transition to peace (PCTP), it is also important to have a government and a 'political will' to design and institute a process to implementing programme policies. Since the ex-militants laid down arms and embraced amnesty, the concern and efforts for a post amnesty for the region seems to have withered away. In 2010, there was a threat by Governors of the Niger Delta states to pullout of the implementation of the programme on the ground of what the six Governors described as "lack of post amnesty programme". Apart from the establishment of the Ministry of Niger Delta (MND), there have not been concerted programmes of development, policy frameworks and political reforms to develop the Niger Delta, and address the region's grievances (causes and triggers of conflict).The critical question of what was to be done after the amnesty was embraced remains hazy and lacking in action commitment.

The PAP did not include resettlement which according to Ikelegbe and Umukoro (2016), pertains to the creation of access to and acquisition of land, tools and credit to ex-fighters that require employment in agriculture such as farming and fishing, and the provision of social benefits, disability support schemes and pension support schemes that are provided somewhat more permanently to enhance survival and welfare of ex-combatants. The access that ex-militants have to natural capital as arable and grazing land, water, forest, fisheries and games (Ikelegbe and Umukoro, 2016) argues is critical to both poverty reduction and social peace. He further that, 'a resettlement component to the DDR would have facilitated reintegration and post reintegration engagements in such occupations as farming and fishery which are traditional to the region'. PAP would have needed to facilitate access to land and water bodies, provide start up tools, technical support and financial support to get a considerable number of the ex-militants into self employment in productive activities. The advantage would have been that some of them would have had some experiences in these activities which would have made it easier for re-engagement.

Moreover, PAP did not include provision of employments through pre-arranged systems into oil companies and oil serving companies, the military and security agencies and the public service. There are no quotas of any kind for engagement into specified Ministries Department and Agencies (MDAs) of government, neither is there any programme of short term public works employment to engage ex-militants and the youth.

Lastly, it is perhaps necessary to also state albeit in passing that, there was also the brazen exclusion of the Governors and governments of the South States and NGOs in the design and implementation of PAP. Although, several international agencies, international non-governmental organizations, the World Bank, the United Nations, and its agencies such as UNDP, FAO, UNICEF and regional and continental organizations such as the EU, ECOWAS, AU, have been involved in providing technical, medical, humanitarian, resources and other assistance and support for DDR in several countries, they are absent in Niger Delta PAP; yet, their involvement or solicited support and technical assistance should have been a major booster not only of capacity but of confidence among ex-militants and the region; and the integrity and legitimacy of the programme (Ikelegbe and Umukoro 2016). There is thus, no intergovernmental structure that integrates and synergies efforts and activities.

Against, this background, this paper argues that the amnesty programme is flout with so many peace building mechanisms and the underlying consequences of these are the increase in post amnesty violent clashes in the region. Much of the failures suggest a new post amnesty policy redirection in order to achieve lasting peace in the region.

### Data Presentation/Analysis

Our survey involved 900 respondents randomly drawn from 5 categories of respondents: the ex-militants, non-militants, and staff of the amnesty offices, civil liberty organizations and government political office appointees in the Niger Delta. The analysis and discussion aim to find out whether the amnesty programme has been able to impact sustainable peace in post amnesty Niger Delta or not.

**Table 1:** Observed Responses from 900 Respondents to determine the various contexts of the amnesty programme and post conflict transition to peace building in the Niger Delta.

Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	UN	TOTAL
Are there evidence of the amnesty programme disarmament curtailing arms proliferation, cultism and gang war in post amnesty Niger Delta.	(a) 9	(b) 7	(c) 10	(d) 223	(e) 3	252
Demobilization of ex-militants has transformed them into non-violent behaviour in post amnesty.	(f) 6	(g) 11	(h) 24	(i) 107	(j) 4	152
There are proofs that Niger Delta ex-militants have been adequately reintegrated and rehabilitated in post amnesty.	(k) 2	(l) 17	(m) 33	(n) 111	(o) 37	200
The Niger Delta has experienced remarkable infrastructural development in Post Amnesty.	(p) 7	(q) 20	(r) 25	(s) 97	(t) 1	150
Are there evidence of inclusion of the Niger Delta People in the programme policy and implementation	(u) 4	(v) 26	(w) 36	(x) 73	(y) 7	146
<b>Grand Total</b>	28	81	128	611	52	900

Source: field survey, (2020)

**Table 2:** Computation of Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) Based on (O) and (E) Frequencies.

$$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum (O - E)^2}{E}$$

Cell	O	E	O-E	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	(O-E) <sup>2</sup> / E
(a)	9	7.84	1.16	1.3456	0.17
(b)	7	22.68	-15.68	-245.86	10.84
(C)	10	35.84	-25.84	-667.71	18.63
(d)	223	171.08	51.92	2,695.68	15.76
(e)	3	14.56	-11.56	-133.63	-9.18
(f)	6	4.73	1.27	1.61	0.34
(g)	11	11.25	-0.25	-0.06	-0.01
(h)	24	21.62	2.38	5.66	0.26
(i)	107	103.19	3.81	14.51	0.14
(j)	4	8.78	-4.78	22.84	2.60
(k)	2	6.22	-4.22	-17.80	-2.86
(l)	17	18.00	-1	-1	-0.06
(m)	33	28.44	4.56	20.79	0.73
(n)	111	135.78	-24.78	-614.04	-4.52
(o)	37	11.56	25.44	647.19	55.99
(p)	7	4.67	2.33	5.42	1.16
(q)	20	13.5	6.5	42.25	3.13
(r)	25	21.33	3.67	13.46	0.63
(s)	97	101.83	-4.83	-23.32	-0.23
(t)	1	8.67	-7.67	-58.82	-6.79

(u)	4	4.54	-0.54	-0.29	-0.06
(v)	26	13.14	12.86	165.37	12.59
(w)	36	20.76	15.24	232.25	11.19
(x)	73	99.12	-26.12	-682.25	-6.88
(y)	7	8.44	1.44	2.07	0.25
<b>Grand Total</b>					165

Source: field study, (2020)

**Table 3:** Contingency Table (5x5) For Observed and Expected Frequencies

Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	UN	TOTAL
Are there evidence of the amnesty programme disarmament curtailing arms proliferation, cultism and gang war in post amnesty Niger Delta.	9 (7.84)	7 (22.68)	10 (35.84)	223 (171.08)	3 (14.56)	252
Demobilization of ex-militants has transformed them into non-violent behaviour in post amnesty.	6 (4.73)	11 (11.25)	24 (21.62)	107 (103.19)	4 (8.78)	152
There are proofs that Niger Delta ex-militants have been adequately reintegrated and rehabilitated in post amnesty	2 (6.22)	17 (18.00)	33 (28.44)	111 (135.78)	37 (11.56)	200
The Niger Delta has experienced remarkable infrastructural development in Post Amnesty	7 (4.67)	20 (13.5)	25 (21.33)	97 (101.83)	1 (8.67)	150
Are there evidence of inclusion of the Niger Delta People in the programme policy and implementation	4 (4.54)	26 (13.14)	36 (20.76)	73 (99.12)	7 (8.44)	146
<b>Grand Total</b>	28	81	128	611	52	900

Source: field study, (2020)

From table 2 above, the calculated  $X^2$  is 165. To determine whether to accept or reject the null hypothesis, we refer and check the chi-square table also called table of critical value or table of chi-square distributions  $X^2$ . To refer and use table effectively, we recall our level of significance (this is oftentimes set at 0.05), and also determine our degree of freedom (df). The formula for degree of freedom in a contingency table is:

$$df = (R-1)(C-1)$$

Where R=the numbers of rows

C= the number of columns

Applying the above formula, we have:

$$\begin{aligned} df &= (5-1)(5-1) \\ &= 4 \times 4 \\ &= 16 \end{aligned}$$

Significance level=0.05

Table value=26.296

Decision Rule: when chi-square calculated is greater than the table value, reject null hypothesis.

From the result of the chi-square calculation, 165 is greater than the table value of 26.296. This implies that the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) that amnesty programme has not impacted significantly in post conflict transition to peace building in the Niger Delta is accepted, while the alternate hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) that amnesty programme has impacted significantly in post conflict transition to peace building in the Niger Delta is rejected.

### 3. DISCUSSION

This study draws a conclusion that amnesty programme failure to enshrine effective post conflict peace building mechanisms in the Niger Delta exacerbates the resurgence of militancy, local cultism, oil theft and bunkering etc. This is in contradistinction to government rhetoric that the amnesty programme is successful in the restoration of peace in the Niger Delta.

The study is consistent with a number of recent studies in the literature which suggest that all the short comings show that amnesty programme conceptualization and implementation are defective. Our study reveals that the disarmament and demobilisation processes which the government declare a success was never thoroughly carried out. It was like submission of arms by armed militants for financial settlement and stoppage of militancy to allow the oil to flow. Besides, recent studies confirmed that not all the guns submitted were from the militants; that state Governors actually bought some arms to bolster the process since the rate of arms submitted were poor. This account also justifies the proliferation of small and light weapons (SALWs) in circulation in post amnesty and used in the perpetration of crime. Ebiede and Lander, (2017) in a recent study on the Niger Delta conflict have blamed the proliferation of small arms for the rising social conflict.

It is also uncovered that these outcomes divulge arms and ammunition to unemployed and aggrieved groups in the Niger Delta. This has encouraged the defiance to the authority of the state and traditional institutions. More worrisome, is the serial cult killings, gang wars, armed gangs in communities across the Niger Delta. This reinforces the theory that ex-militants in the Niger Delta are involved in oil-for weapons swaps with dubious international arms dealers and oil merchants and establishes serious linkages between arms available to insurgents and arms and cultism and gang war in the region. Thus, in the Niger Delta, post amnesty violence has taken several dimensions in recent times, which calls for urgent policy attention to curb the menace.

The study also confirmed that the demobilization exercise was defective. This supported an earlier empirical study by Udegbuma (2013) that the two weeks demobilization for the ex-militants in camp at Obubra Cross River State did not effectively de-psychologised the ex-militants from violence. This is reflective in the non transformative behaviour of the ex-militants metamorphosing into cultists and inflecting untold hardship, and causing social tension in communities in the Niger Delta.

Seminal studies (Vurasi and Nna, 2020; Ebiede and Langer, 2017) supported the argument that ex-militants maintain high level of alliance and allegiance to their previous camps and 'war lords' to execute political/electoral 'dirty jobs' viz. Kidnapping, maiming, destruction of campaign rallies, snatching of ballot boxes, and opposing community leadership etc. This also appears to substantiate recent reports (Kia and Vurasi, 2013) linking ex-militants with certain unscrupulous members of the nation's military.

The study unveiled that the ex-militants are handsomely rewarded by their political pay masters with accolades, ranging from chieftaincy titles, appointments into political offices at different levels, awarding of contracts etc. Peace building becomes quite elusive under this delusive guise, when the actual causes of conflict -the Niger Delta question (?) are left unattended to!

Our study also found that, programme implementation has been militant centred and quite exclusionary of the Niger Delta people. Basically, non-militants, victims of war, women and children, the elderly and people in IDP camps have been left to suffer their fates all through the programme implementation. More so, the reintegration/rehabilitation of ex-militants has also been abysmally poor. Studies by (Joab-Peterside, 2010; Ibaba, 2011; Imongan and Ikelegbe, 2015, 2016) affirm that many of the ex-militants have received training but have not been engaged and employed to profitable careers. Nonetheless, a few have been engaged in jobs and vocations outside of their 'needs' and contrary to programme objective. Muggah (2006) and Okonofua (2011) have respectively argued that unless the special needs of ex-combatants are addressed many of them will fall back through the cracks and reintegrate onto the streets, degenerates into prostitution or crime, or return as mercenaries or paid combatants in another war -a more deadly campaign that may be difficult to halt once it begins. Muggah's study draws from the experience in Angola.

We cannot overstate these needs which vary in intensity and severity based on their experiences. But the truth remains that the socio-economic reintegration of the ex-militants has proven immaterial and inconsequential to sustainable peace in post amnesty. This shows that the resurgence of militancy has great influence on the emergence of violent conflict and cultism -a problem that has plagued the Niger Delta communities for some time now. This calls for strategic and urgent policy reforms to enhance transformative peace building in post conflict Niger Delta.

### 4. CONCLUSION

This study notes that, amnesty programme is a very vital phase in sustaining peace after war in conflict divided societies. In fact; it is an effort to ensure socio-political and economic stability of the society after war. However, in exploring the impact of the amnesty programme in post conflict transition to peace (PCTP) in the Niger Delta, a number of exclusions involving a wide range of issues such as: reconciliation, transitional justice, social provision, gainful empowerment and employment, understanding programmes

designed to address the causes of conflict and the grievances of the past to promote long term stability and justice are fundamentally lacking.

We noted a political amnesty that is focused only on the ex-militants to the exclusion of the generality of the Niger Delta people. This created a wide gap between the unemployed people seeking every available means of survival and the affluent political elite and their privilege ex-militants who see them as willing tools to exploit for ulterior political motives. Nonetheless, while we see the ex-militants disarmament, demobilization and reintegration as important to peace process, we raised concern for policy to include the people, non-militants, unemployed youths and the vulnerable alike, as part of a larger focus to target agents of post conflict.

This study deflates the popular rhetoric of government rating the PAP a huge success and underscores the fact that, the amnesty programme did not effectively broker sustainable peace in the Niger Delta. Post amnesty volatility traceable to a defective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration/rehabilitation of ex-militants orchestrated a situation where arms remained and or diffused into the political system to the extent that issues of contention which ordinarily could have remained confined to peaceful resolution or other approaches of non-violence finds expression in violent crises.

In line with the above, evidence shows that significant variations exist in policy conceptualization and implementation which negatively affected programme objectives and implementation; ultimately leading to the resurgence of militancy and militia groups and the quality of violent outcomes viz. social tension, breakdown of law and order, gang war, cultism, killings, maiming, ransacking communities and desecrating traditional institutions etc. We explain this contradiction as a fall out of the interplay of politics of exclusion and alienation, malfunctioning DDR on one hand, and the loss of confidence by the people in the Nigerian state and the PAP.

The study advocates urgent policy framework which would be more transformative and inclusive based on Lederach's (1997) holistic approach to conflict transformation, in which all parties to the Niger Delta conflict as well as the grievances and socio-economic and political contexts of conflict must be integrated into post conflict peace building architecture.

## Recommendations

Based on the result and findings, the study recommends the following policy actions in order to redirect the PAP to approach the amnesty programme from a post conflict transition perspective, and perhaps recover the lost glory in the Niger Delta.

i.) The federal government and PAP should as a matter of urgency reconsider the option of including the issues of causes and triggers of conflict in the Niger Delta in post amnesty discourse. This can be easily done by revisiting the recommendations of the Niger Delta Technical Committee Report, headed by Ledum Mitee –a Niger Delta peace advocate; involving a wide range of socio-economic and political remedies, and including but not limited to both ecological and environmental remediation in the Niger Delta. This will help to douse grievances and keep hope alive in the inhabitants.

ii.) There is need for a review and new policy framework on reintegration/rehabilitation that will incorporate militants, non-militants and able bodied young men and women including the vulnerable –disabled persons, unemployed, women, children, elderly etc who remained excluded, whereas the ex-militants should be restored to gainful employment that is sustainable beyond programme span. This can be done by offering compulsory employment on 'choice' and 'needs' bases to them in TNOCs, civil service or government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), parastatals, and recruitment into the nation's armed forces. The major success story would be the engagement of an army of the unemployed, and giving a sense of livelihood to the down trodden against foreseeable regrouping against the state. The roles of the private sector, non-governmental organizations and community based organizations in peace building and reintegration are crucial in complementing with the state in the overall stability and sustainability of post conflict transition to peace (PCTP).

iii.) With the current scale of exclusion and the accompanying dissatisfaction; locales in the communities often caught in the cross fire of militia violence and state reprisals should benefit from social welfare scheme, social provision, health care package, pension, gratuities, monthly stipends etc to support their productive economic livelihood, engagement and sustenance i.e. provision of social benefits, disability support schemes and pension support schemes that are provided somewhat more permanently to enhance survival and welfare of the rural poor.

iv.) Rehabilitation and reconstruction of properties, social amenities and communities devastated by the violence between 1997 and 2009 is pertinent to sustainable peace. This requires policy frameworks, political and economic reforms and infrastructures that lay the foundation for recovery of livelihoods. This constitutes deep rooted grievances against the Nigerian state by the inhabitants, and engenders a 'revenge mentality' in the region. Mores so, it fosters the urge, crave and strive of 'making it at all cost syndrome' by individuals to rebuilding them, including but not limited to criminality and armed violence by youth as an options.

v.) While acknowledging the laudable efforts of the federal government in peace building in the Niger Delta, a new stakeholder for peace building should be reconvened including –leaders and representatives of local cult groups, militias, emergent militants

groups etc to chart a wide range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society's attempt for enduring peace in post amnesty Niger Delta. This will engender reconciliation involving non-judicial process, forgiveness, the right to truth, reparations, cease fire and surrendered of arms by cult groups and armed gangs, institute (transitional justice) reforms and consultations in the Niger Delta oil producing communities ravaged by cult war and violence. The process should be institutionalized and owned by critical stakeholders against superimposition by any of the party's to conflict or the federal government.

vi.) Against the backdrop of SALWs in the Niger Delta, we recommend that the Nigerian fire arms Act enacted in 1959 and reviewed in 1990 should be amended to contain the emergence of new trends in the use, repair, importation and penal provisions to stop the menace. Sources of gun running, sponsors and patron-clients in the Niger Delta should be uncovered and exposed.

vii.) We support an earlier policy statement by Vice President Yemi Osibanjo for government granting operating license to indigents/natives involved in illegal oil theft and bunkering to operate -modular refineries. This will further create a sense of belonging and participation in the oil resources at their backyard hitherto deprived of. On the other hand, it will engage a sizeable number of the army of unemployed youths in the communities from outright criminality.

viii.) Our study advocates the second generation of conflict reduction activities to bolster the effects of DDR to be more transformative. This calls for institutional overhaul and transformation of the Niger Delta broad base unlike the traditional DDR which focuses mainly on combatants within military structures. More so, second generation activities and programmes focus not on military units but civilian communities that are affected by armed conflicts. This would help to support the peace process, build trust, contribute to a secure environment and build the foundation for longer term peace building. Because they focus alternatively on area-based, community-based, and collective incentives, second generation activities and programmes have the capacity to engage the entire conflict environment and quicken the march towards sustainable peace.

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The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interests.

#### **Peer-review:**

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#### **Data and materials availability:**

All data associated with this study are present in the paper.

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